The European Research Council

Getting Funding in Economics: Experience with the ERC Applications Process

Adriana Cristoiu
RPO, Scientific Affairs Department

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The ERC supports excellence in frontier research through a bottom-up, individual-based competition

- Scientific governance: independent Scientific Council with 22 members including the ERC President; full authority over funding strategy
- Support by the ERC Executive Agency (autonomous)
- Excellence as the only criterion

- Support for the individual scientist – no networks!
- No predetermined subjects (bottom-up)
- Support of frontier research in all fields of science and humanities; global peer reviewers
- Host Institution located in the EU/AC
After 8 Years of Existence…
A success story

- 50,000 proposals have been evaluated
- Over 4,300 top researchers funded during FP7 (2007-2013)
- 65% are at an early-career stage
- Working in almost 600 different institutions in 32 countries
- 65 nationalities represented
- Highly competitive (overall success rate 10%)
- Benchmarking effect: impact on national programmes and agencies
Established by the European Commission

ERC Budget in H2020

H2020 Budget: €77 billion
ERC Budget 2014-2020: €13 billion

FP7 Budget: €50.5 billion
ERC Budget 2007-2013: €7.5 billion
What does the ERC offer researchers?

**Independence, recognition & visibility**

- to work on a research topic of *own choice* with a team of *own choice*
- to gain true **financial autonomy** for up to 5 years
- to attract **top team members** (EU and non-EU) and **collaborators**
- to move with the grant to any place in Europe if necessary (**portability of grants**)
- to attract additional funding and gain **recognition**, ERC funding is seen as a label of quality
Who can apply?

- Any nationality, age or current place of work
- In conjunction with a Host Institution
  - based in EU or Associated Countries
  - at least 50% of the time spent in EU or AC

Albania
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Israel
the Faroe Islands
FYR Macedonia
Iceland

Israel
Montenegro
Norway
Republic of Moldova
Serbia
Switzerland
Turkey
What is evaluated?

Excellence is the sole evaluation criterion

- **Excellence of the Research Project**
  - **Ground breaking nature:** Important challenge? Substantially beyond the current state of art? High-gain/high-risk balance
  - **Potential impact:** Possibility of a major break-through?
  - **Scientific Approach:** Feasibility, novel concepts/methodology

- **Excellence of the Principal Investigator**
  - **Intellectual capacity**
    - Track-record, capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art, evidence of creative independent thinking
  - **Creativity**
  - **Commitment**
    - Willing to devote a significant part of PI's working time (minimum of 50% for Starting, minimum of 40% for Consolidator Grant, minimum of 30% for Advanced Grant); min 50% time in EU/AC
ERC Grant Schemes

**Starting Grants**
- *starters* (2-7 years after PhD)
  - up to €2.0 M;
  - 5 years

**Consolidator Grants**
- *consolidators* (7-12 years after PhD)
  - up to €2.75 M;
  - 5 years

**Advanced Grants**
- track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years
  - up to €3.5 M;
  - 5 years

**Proof of Concept**
- bridging gap between research - earliest stage of marketable innovation;
  - up to €150,000 for ERC grant holders
Evaluation of proposals
peer review

- **Panel Members:** typically 375 / Call
  - High-level scientists
  - Recruited by ScC from all over the world: ~14% from outside Europe
  - About 12-15 members plus a chair person
  - Evaluate in Step1 and Step2
  - Meet twice in Brussels (panel meetings) → *panel comment to applicants*

- **External Reviewers:** typically 2,000 / call
  - Nominated in Step1 by panel members
  - Evaluate only a small number of proposals only in Step2
  - Do not attend panel meetings → *individual reviews*
Submission to Panels

- Proposals are submitted to a Panel of PI's choice
  - can also flag one “Secondary Review Panel”
  - PI can explain the interdisciplinary nature of the proposal
  - in case of proposals spanning more than one panel or domain, evaluation by members of other panels is possible

- Transfer of proposals between panels may occur if
  - clear mistake on part of applicant
  - necessary expertise is available in a different panel
  - very rare cases
ERC Panel structure
3 domains and 25 panels

Each panel:
Panel Chair and
12-15 Panel Members

8-21 descriptors/panel

Life Sciences (LS) - 9 panels
LS1 Molecular & Structural Biology & Biochemistry
LS2 Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics & Systems Biology
LS3 Cellular & Developmental Biology
LS4 Physiology, Pathophysiology & Endocrinology
LS5 Neurosciences & Neural disorders
LS6 Immunity & Infection
LS7 Diagnostic Tools, Therapies & Public health
LS8 Evolutionary, Population & Environmental Biology
LS9 Applied Life Sciences & Non-Medical Biotechnology

Social Sciences and Humanities (SH) - 6 panels
SH1 Markets, Individuals & Institutions
SH2 The Social World, Diversity & Common Ground
SH3 Environment, Space & Population
SH4 The Human Mind and its Complexity
SH5 Cultures & Cultural Production
SH6 The Study of the Human Past

Physical Sciences & Engineering (PE) - 10 panels
PE1 Mathematics
PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter
PE3 Condensed Matter Physics
PE4 Physical & Analytical Chemical sciences
PE5 Synthetic Chemistry & Materials
PE6 Computer Science & Informatics
PE7 Systems & Communication Engineering
PE8 Products & Process Engineering
PE9 Universe Sciences
PE10 Earth System Science
Panel SH1 - Individuals, Markets and Organisations
2016 panel descriptors
NEW

SH1_1 Macroeconomics; monetary economics; economic growth
SH1_2 International trade; international business; international management; spatial economics
SH1_3 Development economics, health economics, education economics
SH1_4 Financial economics; banking; corporate finance; international finance; accounting; auditing; insurance
SH1_5 Labour and demographic economics; human resource management
SH1_6 Econometrics; operations research
SH1_7 Behavioural economics; experimental economics; neuro-economics
SH1_8 Microeconomics; game theory
SH1_9 Industrial organisation; strategy; entrepreneurship
SH1_10 Management; marketing; organisational behaviour; operations management
SH1_11 Technological change, innovation, research & development
SH1_12 Agricultural economics; energy economics; environmental economics
SH1_13 Public economics; political economics; law and economics
SH1_14 Quantitative economic history; institutional economics; economic systems

Prepping an application

- **Register early**, get familiar with the system and templates and start filling in the forms.

- A submitted proposal can be **revised until the call deadline** by submitting a new version and overwriting the previous one.

- Follow the templates, formatting rules and **page limits**.

- **Download and proof-read** the proposal before submitting.

- Attach all documents required (e.g. children birth certificates for extension of the eligibility window).
## Application process

### Structure of the proposal

#### Administrative documentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part A - online forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General information on research proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host Institution (HI) and applicant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call-specific questions</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annexes (submitted as .pdf)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Host Institution support letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy of PhD (or equivalent degree) certificate (only StG &amp; CoG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If applicable:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- document for extension of eligibility window (only StG &amp; CoG)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- explanatory information on ethical issues</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Documents sent to panel members in Step1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part B1 (submitted as .pdf)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extended Synopsis 5p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV 2p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early achievements (StG &amp; CoG) or 10-year track-record (AdG) 2p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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#### Documents sent to panel/reviewers in Step2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part B2 (submitted as .pdf)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Scientific Proposal 15p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state-of-the-art; objectives; methodology; resources (incl. budget)</td>
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Read the Information for Applicants
Application process
One time submission – two steps assessment

**STEP 1**
Assessment of section 1 – CV and synopsis
Panel members (remote phase)

- Panel meeting

**Score:** B or C

- Proposals retained for step 2: Score A

**Feedback to applicants**

**STEP 2**
Assessment of full proposal
Panel members and reviewers (remote phase)

- Panel meeting + interview (IG and CoG)

- Ranked list of proposals: Score A

**Score:** B

**Feedback to applicants**
**Application process**

*One time submission – two steps assessment*

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**STEP 1**

- Assessment of section 1 – CV and synopsis
  - Panel members (remote phase)

- Panel meeting

- Proposals retained for step 2: Score A

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**STEP 2**

- Assessment of full proposal
  - Panel members and reviewers (remote phase)

- Panel meeting + interview (StG and CoG)

- Ranked list of proposals: Score A

- Feedback to applicants

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Typical reasons for rejection

Principal Investigator

- Insufficient track-record
- Insufficient leadership profile / independence

Proposed project

- Scope: too narrow ↔ too broad/unfocussed
- Incremental research/continuation of previous work
- Work plan/team composition not detailed enough/unclear
  - Part B1 (synopsis) vs. Part B2 (full proposal)
- Insufficient risk management
Resubmission success rate examples

**StG 2014 Call success rate** 11.7 %
- SR F 11.4 %
- SR M 11.9 %

*Success rate resubmissions 17.4%*
- SR resubmissions F 18.2%
- SR resubmissions M 16.9%

**AdG 2013 call success rate** 12.3%
- SR resubmissions 16%
Funded projects, 2007-2013
(% of awarded grants per panel of all Calls)

# grants/panel
SH1: 142
SH2: 183
SH3: 72
SH4: 191
SH5: 90
SH6: 136
Evaluated proposals in 2007-2013 Calls by SH panels
(% of total proposals in the SH domain)
National initiatives in support of finalist projects in the ERC calls

A new partnership between National Funding Councils and ERC

- **BE Flanders**: FWO supports the best ranked PIs on the ERC-StG reserve list
- **FI**: support scheme for finalists in reserve lists since 2009 calls
- **BE**: Flanders: FWO supports the best ranked PIs on the ERC-StG reserve list
- **SE**: support for unfunded finalists of StG calls since 2007
- **NO**: The Research Council supports unfunded StG finalists
- **PL**: Support scheme for finalists of 2009 and 2010 calls. It might continue
- **IE**: New scheme opening in 2012. Previous scheme for StG2007 finalists
- **HU**: Call for unfunded ERC finalists of StG2007 and StG2009
- **LU**: FNR supports unfunded StG and AdG finalists since 2009 calls
- **FR**: ANR launched an initiative to support unfunded StG2007 finalists
- **CZ**: opened support scheme for finalists in 2012
- **RO**: opened support scheme for finalists in 2012
- **TR**: Considers a scheme to support unfunded ERC finalists
- **PT**: New national initiative in support of ERC finalists being developed
- **ES**: support for unfunded finalists of StG calls since 2007
- **CH**: SNSF launched an initiative to back unfunded StG2007 finalists
- **SI**: Complementary scheme for unfunded finalists of 2010 calls
- **BG**: Develops a scheme to financially support projects in the ERC reserve list
- **CY**: Research Promotion Foundation supported StG 2009 finalists
- **IT**: Call open to all unfunded StG2007 finalists
- **EL**: support for unfunded StG and AdG finalists in 2010 and 2011 calls
Call Planning 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 Calls</th>
<th>OPEN</th>
<th>DEADLINE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STG</td>
<td>29/07/2015</td>
<td>17/11/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td>15/10/2015</td>
<td>2/2/2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADG</td>
<td>24/02/2016</td>
<td>1/9/2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>POC</td>
<td>22/10/2015</td>
<td>16/2/2016</td>
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<td>26/5/2016</td>
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<td>4/10/2016</td>
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POC 2015 - Existing grant holders only

Budget ERC 2016 Calls
- Consolidator: 605 M. Euro
- Advanced: 540 M. Euro
- Proof of Concept: 20 M. Euro
- Starting: 485 M. Euro
More information:

Information for Applicants and the Work Programme

More information on
http://erc.europa.eu/

National Contact Point in your country (NCP)
erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points

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THANK YOU.